

Iowa Outdoors
Iowa Department of Natural Resources
www.iowadnr.com

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**ICE CONDITIONS VARIABLE ACROSS STATE; ANGLERS
URGED TO EXERCISE CAUTION**

DES MOINES -- Although the recent cold weather has some of the more ardent ice anglers testing the hard water in some areas of the state, DNR officials are cautioning Iowans that many of the state's lakes and rivers are still under unsafe ice conditions.

"Highly variable" is what state fisheries staff are calling ice conditions across all of Iowa. Although portions of some lakes in northern Iowa had ice depth readings of 6 to 7 inches this weekend, Scott Grummer, a DNR fisheries technician in Clear Lake, said some of those same lakes also had areas of open water or unsafe ice. In some cases, Grummer said the ice that had formed had done so under windy conditions, which tends to produce weaker, more variable ice. Snow cover has also been a factor in ice strength, he said.

Silver Lake in Worth County, for example, had ice depth readings of 7 inches up several yards out from shore. But further out, measurements dropped to an inch, and in the middle, there was open water. Grummer said conditions were much the same on Clear Lake in Cerro Gordo County. Southwest Iowa was even less favorable, with ice just beginning to form on lakes and ponds there. In southeast Iowa, the ice was "no where near safe, even on small ponds," said Vance Poulton, a fisheries technician at Lake Darling.

Grummer said anyone venturing out on the early ice should pay close attention to weather factors in the area, and if they do go out, use common sense and test ice thickness frequently with a spud bar or by cutting test holes with an auger. It's also a good idea to fish with a partner and wear a life jacket. Also, when fishing with friends on early ice, walk single-file and don't fish close together in a group. As cold weather continues, Grummer expects ice conditions to improve significantly.

The Lumberman's Association and other sources have tabulated ice strength figures and the load each can support, based on ice in good condition.

- 1 inch of ice - not safe
- 2 inches - one person on foot under good conditions
- 3 inches - group in single file or spread out
- 4 inches - general use
- 5 inches - snowmobiles
- 7 1/2 inches of ice - car (2 ton gross)
- 8 inches - light truck (2 1/2 ton gross)
- 10 inches - medium truck (3 1/2 ton gross)

Also, remember blue ice is stronger than clear ice. Clear river ice is 15 percent weaker than clear lake ice. Use caution around clear or honeycombed ice, and stay clear of dark spots in the ice.

With ice fishing interest growing, the DNR's Iowa Ice Fishing Report will begin the week of Dec. 22. For more information, contact Alan Foster at (515) 281-8874.

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NEW NONRESIDENT HOLIDAY DEER LICENSES NOW ON SALE

DES MOINES -- A new license and season created earlier this year is giving nonresident hunters who missed out on the regular seasons another chance to hunt deer in Iowa.

The Nonresident Holiday Deer Hunting License, which went on sale Monday (Dec. 15), is designed for those nonresidents who may be spending a limited amount of time in Iowa over the holidays. It is valid from Dec. 24, 2003, to Jan. 2, 2004, a time when many nonresidents return to Iowa to spend time with family and friends.

"The new Nonresident Deer Hunting License is timed specifically for that period when many people take vacation and come home for the holiday," said Alan Foster, spokesperson for the Iowa DNR. "Spending time in the deer woods is a good way to burn off a few of those Christmas calories, and at \$50.50, it is substantially less expensive than regular nonresident deer licenses."

Only those hunters who have not already obtained a nonresident deer hunting license this season are eligible. All licenses are for antlerless-deer only, and a recent check showed roughly 800 were still available. Hunters must choose between any one of the 10 hunting zones in the state, however there is no quota per zone. Zone maps are available on the internet at www.iowadnr.com or in the 2003 Iowa Deer and Fall Turkey Hunting Regulations and License Instructions booklet. Licenses, along with the booklet, are available at the roughly 900 license vendors who sell Iowa licenses.

Only qualifying muzzleloaders, handguns and bows may be used during the season. In addition to the deer license, hunters must have a valid small game hunting license and habitat fee.

Having a small game hunting license means they can also hunt any other small game species in season at the time, such as pheasant, rabbit and squirrel, Foster added.

For more information, contact Alan Foster at (515) 281-8874.

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DEER PERMIT SALES HIT ALL-TIME HIGH; HUNTERS URGED TO HARVEST MORE DOES

DES MOINES -- Even with deer permit sales shattering the record, the DNR is still encouraging hunters to shoot more does to reduce next year's deer population.

Deer permit sales hit 290,000 as of Dec. 15, surpassing the full-season record of 265,000 set last year, according to Richard Bishop, wildlife bureau chief of the DNR. But Bishop said he is still hopeful that hunters will continue buying the remaining doe permits, which will help reduce the deer population to more acceptable levels.

With the Special Late Season to run Jan. 11-19, nearly 6,000 antlerless-only permits remain in 23 counties. After a hunter buys the first doe tag at \$26, additional doe permits are only \$11 each.

"Hunters who quit hunting because they can't eat any more deer do not have that excuse this year," Bishop said. "They can donate their deer to Help Us Stop Hunger (HUSH) at 43 participating lockers in central and southern Iowa. The less fortunate need that food, and the state needs fewer deer."

HUSH is a cooperative program of the Food Bank of Iowa, the DNR, hunters and many donors who pay for deer processing to provide venison to the needy. It does not cost hunters for the processing, but every time a hunter buys a deer permit, they can donate \$5 to help. So far, more than 3,600 such donations have been made.

The original goal of 1,000 donated deer was met before mid-December, and estimates now are more than 1,500 deer will be given under the new program.

It will take a few years of increased hunting pressure to make a real difference in deer numbers, said Bishop. Increased deer-vehicle accidents, and crop and residential landscape damage have contributed to DNR's goal of reducing the deer herd.

Counties with doe-only permits still available as of Dec. 16 include: Adair, Adams, Allamakee, Audubon, Davis, Decatur, Des Moines, Fremont, Guthrie, Henry, Howard, Keokuk, Lee, Louisa, Mills, Montgomery, Page, Ringgold, Taylor, Union, Wapello, Washington, and Wayne.

For more information, contact: Terry Little, DNR, 515-281-8660; or Alan Foster, DNR, 515-281-8874.

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STATE OFFICIALS STRESS SAFETY IN WAKE OF TRAGIC SNOWMOBILE ACCIDENT

WOODBURY COUNTY -- The recent tragic deaths of four young girls in a snowmobile accident in north-western Iowa brings to seven the number of deaths in the state in snowmobile-related accidents this year. It also has state natural resource officials reminding snowmobilers to be careful while operating their machines, and for motorists to be cautious while traveling Iowa's rural roadways.

"The snowmobile season is just getting underway, and the way the winter is starting, it looks like there will be plenty more days where snowmobilers will be out," said Rod Slings, recreational safety supervisor for the Iowa DNR. "Historically, the number of snowmobile accidents is directly related to both how long we have snow on the ground and how much. The more snow, the more snowmobilers, and the more opportunity for accidents."

The four killed were sisters Andie Phillips, 13, and Katie Phillips, 10, and Kylie Koch, 10, all of Pierson; and Lauren Herbold, 11, of rural Correctionville. They were riding on and around private property when a vehicle driven by 16-year-old Daniel Bouc crested the hill, was unable to stop, and collided with the two machines on a rural Woodbury County gravel road. Woodbury County sheriff's officials, the Iowa State Patrol and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources investigated the accident. No charges are expected.

"This was a very tragic accident, and my thoughts and prayers go out to the parents, families and friends of the victims and the driver in this situation," said Woodbury County conservation officer Stacey Sisco, who assisted in the investigation. "The Pierson community has really been wonderful by pulling together to help each other deal with this tragic event."

Recreational safety officials recommend riders review the current Iowa snowmobile regulations, available through DNR offices or its website at www.iowadnr.com. Safety courses, required for anyone ages 12 to 17 who operate on public land, ice or land purchased with snowmobile funds, are also a good idea for non-seasoned riders. Those under age 12 cannot operate a snowmobile on public land, ice or land purchased with

snowmobile funds unless accompanied, on the same machine, by a responsible adult who is at least 18 years of age.

“The thing to remember is snowmobiles are motor vehicles, with the potential for power and speed, and they take a certain level of skill, knowledge and training to operate,” Slings said.

“The Iowa State Snowmobile Association encourages everyone to ride safe and obey the laws of the trail,” added Jerry Kramer, president of the organization. “We also send our regards to the families.”

For a complete list of general operating regulations, see the current Iowa Snowmobile Regulations, call the Iowa conservation officer in your county or contact the DNR Central Office in Des Moines at (515) 281-5918.

For more information, contact David Downing, DNR, at (515) 281-3449.

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EDITOR’S NOTE: A word-document table containing a Snowmobile Accident Summary from 1997 through Dec. 15, 2003, is available by contacting Alan Foster at alan.foster@dnr.state.ia.us, or by phone at (515) 281-8874.